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ST. THOMAS-ST. JOHN EDUCATORS COMPLETE ANNUAL TRAINING TO BENEFIT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

ST. THOMAS, USVI—Twenty-six teachers in the St. Thomas-St. John District successfully completed the annual Bilingual Education to Speakers of Other Languages (BESOL) professional development training held June 15-July 5 at Edith Williams Alternative Academy, Lockhart Elementary School and the Office of the Insular Superintendent.

The training was spearheaded by District Coordinator of English for Speakers of Other Languages Dr. Migdalia Cruz-Arthurton, Ed. D, and is offered to regular and special education professionals, paraprofessionals and administrators.

Participants read and discussed information on cooperative learning strategies that can be used to maximize student participation in the classroom. Teachers also participated in group exercises presenting key findings from research. To boost cultural morale, participants took part in a Cultural Awareness Simulation named Bafa Bafa, where they attempted to enter the Alphan or Bethan culture by using established rules and customs of those cultures.

Cruz-Arthurton expressed her satisfaction with the enthusiastic participation of the group.

“The participants involved in this training were an enthusiastic group that wanted to learn how to better serve the English learners in their classroom,” she said. “When I completed the training sessions, I felt happy because I had provided them with the skills, knowledge and strategies they needed.”

The training provides an understanding of local and federal laws on English language acquisition; develops cultural awareness; develops a bridge between the home, the community and the school;

provides an understanding of the language acquisition and learning process for English language learners; and provides an understanding of characteristics of the language and the learning process for English language learners.

“When the English learners return in September, their teachers will be better prepared to instruct them in meeting their academic content area needs and supporting, at the same time, their acquisition of the second language—English,” Cruz-Arthurton said.

At the close of the four-week workshop, the educators completed a case study and received a certificate of completion and a stipend.

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